

ARBORIVITAL MEDICINE.

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THE TREATMENT OF CHRONIC RHEUMATISM.

It needs, I consider, no apology whatever my bringing forward these few cases of chronic rheumatism, an affection for which it goes without saying our treatment leaves much to be desired. There are few affections upon which more has been written, few that from a theoretical point of view are better understood, and few from which the results derived from ordinary treatment are more unsatisfactory.

It is surely interesting to inquire what influence single doses of medicine properly selected are capable of exercising upon some of the many phases of this very common affection. The first case that I wish to bring forward is one of recurring arthritis and is thus described in a letter written to me by the lady interested in the case. The lady, writing on the 9th of February, 1897, states : “ I have just seen a poor woman known to me about twelve years and have promised to ask whether you would be good enough to send a dose for her husband ; he is fifty-five years of age, and is suffering from rheumatic gout which prevents him from following his vocation as ostler or farrier's man. He works till his hands and feet swell, until the pain is too acute; he then tries a hot cabbage leaf ; and last week was in bed and had doctor's stuff. This goes on year after year and his distress and that of his wife is often great.”

In reply to this letter I sent to the address indicated *Arbutus Andrachne* φA.

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On the 9th of the following month, March, 1897, I received from the same lady this report : “ Mr. H., to whom you sent a dose of medicine for rheumatic gout, although better, is still unable to work, his left foot being very painful and much swollen. It is some time since he had the dose ; he wrote to you in a week saying he was better ; his left leg has been bad for some days, but the foot is the worst now.”

The same dose was repeated.

On the 16th of March came in the following report : “ Mr. H., to whom you sent the second dose for rheumatic gout, is very much better ; the swelling went down very soon after the second dose, and he was yesterday very much improved.”

No more medicine.

The third report, about the middle of April, ran thus : “ Mr. H. has never been so free from rheumatism for many years as since your last dose. He is very grateful.”

This man has gone on earning his bread since these reports were taken, and not until about three weeks ago, when I sent him a dose of the same remedy for lumbago, has he had any repetition of the remedy.

It will be easy to object that I had not seen this patient, that I had had but very few particulars of his case before me when prescribing, that, in fact, a full description of his symptoms had not been given. These and many other objections may be raised ; but the fact cannot be gainsaid that this man, who had been completely crippled by successive attacks of rheumatism taking the form of recurring arthritis, is now able to continue his work and earn his livelihood.

Had such an effect followed from the application of excessive heat in enclosed chambers to the joints, a process that used to be known under the name of Baking, or had the same effect followed from the liberal application of nitrate of silver to the joints, a treatment that was well described by old Abey Colles, of Dublin, as having the undoubted drawback of “ obscuring matters” ; or had the effect followed from mesmerism, hypnotism, or other magical procedure, the result would have been declared, I have no doubt, even by members of the homeopathic party, to have been singularly satisfactory. But with that inconsistency so inseparable from human nature, I doubt

very much if the result will make any impression upon these gentlemen.

The next case of chronic rheumatism that I have to bring forward was communicated to me by the same lady to whom I am indebted for the last. The case is that of Mrs. H., who is described as never having had rheumatism and as being most active until about two years ago, when she was called up many times at night by a fellow-tenant in Alms Houses, in London, and took cold. She suffers, the lady says, with swollen feet and hands, and her arms are at times useless or nearly so with rheumatism. Otherwise she is pretty well, though she occasionally has trouble with her liver. She would be very thankful to be able to walk again, for though nearly seventy years of age, she is apparently not worn out. For this patient I gave on the 11th of March, 1897, *Alnus Glutinosus* ϕA , and received six days afterwards this report : "Mrs. H. took on Thursday last the dose you so kindly sent her for rheumatism. She became very weak and powerless and was in bed all day Sunday, her rheumatism also feeling much worse. My sister," the lady goes on to say, "saw her yesterday (Monday), and she was feeling very unwell indeed." In reply to this I thought it better to leave her without medicine, and on March 26th received this report ; "My sister has just called to see Mrs. H. and finds that her rheumatism is no better. She herself is feeling a shade better than last week, but of course then she was feeling so much weaker and lower than usual. In reply to this letter I sent her a dose *Bryonia Dioica* ϕA . A week or two afterwards I received a letter, which I am sorry to say has been mislaid, to the effect that she was very bad indeed, was really seriously ill and quite confined to her bed. The dose seemed to have quite upset her, so much so that no further treatment was adopted. The next report I received was in the beginning of September, when the lady wrote : "I visited Mrs. H. to-day, so that I could send you a report of her health as promised. Rheumatism continued badly for some months after she had taken your doses, but during the hot weather towards the end of July she was taken ill with a severe bilious attack owing, as she thought, to the great heat of the weather, and for a time it was hardly thought she could recover she was so ill, but strangely enough at that time the rheumatism completely left her, and since then she

has had no return of it. The inference from this is that the disturbance set agoing by the first dose should have been allowed to expend itself, when in all likelihood great relief would have soon followed.

Preposterous as it may seem to suppose that the effect left by the two doses of medicine, and which undoubtedly disturbed her system, could still have been in work months afterwards to the culmination of her sufferings in a severe bilious attack, it is no more preposterous than to imagine that a single drop of the fresh juice of the common alder tree and of the bryonia plant, preserved in spirit, can bring on serious symptoms. That serious disturbance of the system ensued upon the administration of both is beyond question. What must ever be left questionable is whether this disturbance went on for such a long period and eventuated in the dispersal of the rheumatism.

Thus we are face to face with a great difficulty in medicine which is by no means removed by bombastic expletives in which may be heard remarks regarding tomfoolery, want of common sense, and other polite descriptions of sentiments that are reserved for those who are bold enough to describe facts as they see them.

The next case I have to bring forward is that described to me by a lady patient, in a poor woman of about fifty-six years of age, who has been a sufferer from rheumatism all her life. The only particulars I could get were that she had had rheumatic fever four times, the first attack being when she was twelve years of age, and the last in November of 1896, since which attack she has been completely crippled. The joints are shiny and swell very much, the wrists and hands being particularly bad, but all her joints seem to be affected. Her daughter writes, "My mother's symptoms are swelling and redness of the joints, causing much pain when moved, worse on going to bed and getting warm. Joints fearfully stiff. Bowels very obstinate. Occasionally has a movement in front of the eyes, causing dizziness." Without being able to see this patient, I prescribed for her towards the end of March of this year, *Arbutus Andrachne* ϕ A, and I heard nothing whatever of the patient until my lady friend was in with me in the beginning of July. Then I asked her about the poor widow's case, and received for reply that the dose had had no appreciable effect whatever. I there-

upon re-read the case, and again sent exactly the same dose. This was on the 6th of July, 1897. On the 16th of July I received this letter concerning her. "I saw Mrs. C. last Tuesday evening. She had had the powder on the previous Tuesday evening, so it is exactly a week since she took it. She decidedly felt herself better, and felt confident that if she could get more rest and work less hard she would greatly benefit from your powder. The knuckle-joint of her left index finger was much swollen and inflamed. It was just like a large carbuncle or boil, and very painful. But she said her shoulder was much better, and she felt much better and brighter in herself, and asked me to send you her grateful thanks." The next report is on the 28th of July, no other medicine having been taken: "I called to see Mrs. C. this evening and found her in such good spirits and looking so much better. She has taken no other medicine whatever since she took the last powder on the 6th of July. She says she is marvellously better, and hopes to go and see you one day next week and thank you personally." On the 4th of August the patient came to see me, and reported how very much better she was, that she could move her joints better, could work well, and get up and down stairs with comparative comfort. She still gets pain under the shoulders and across the back, muscular pains evidently. The knuckles of her hands are going down in size, and from not being able to dress herself she can now do so easily. I found much distortion of the fingers and swelling of the metacarpal joints of both hands, particularly of the left, much more than I expected from the descriptions. On this occasion I repeated the same dose, and after the holidays, that is to say on the 15th of September, I received this note from the patient herself:—

"DEAR SIR,—I beg to present my duty and also my very grateful thanks to you. The powders you have given me have worked wonders. I am able to get about now, whereas I had before to go in a bath-chair. I cannot find words to express the gratitude I feel towards you."

The improvement, therefore, in this case cannot be questioned. What is so difficult to explain is that the first dose when given towards the end of March seemed to have had no effect whatever. Can it be that its effects were really in operation, but without disturbing

the system in such a way as to secure the attention of the patient, and that the second dose acted more promptly in consequence?

The case looks as if we had for deforming rheumatism a very valuable curative agent in the *Arbutus Andrachne*. This finds a certain corroboration in a case now under treatment in a village near London, where a man of forty-eight has been suffering for the last two years from arthritis deformans that he contracted a little over two years ago during influenza complicated with bronchitis and pleurisy. This was followed by pains in the knuckles of both hands and in the joints of both feet, followed by deformity of the principal joints of the body, the right hand and the left foot being singularly deformed, thickened and misshapen. He has pains nearly all over his body, and very much in the lower part of the stomach, worse in north-east winds. The left great toe is quite fixed.

Now this man has been for a considerable time in University College Hospital, as well as for seven weeks in the hospital at Bath.

He has been under my treatment since the beginning of June, and his testimony now is that the left knee, which was quite stiff, is freely movable ; the pains have ceased in his stomach ; he is not so sensitive to weather, sleeps better, and altogether his condition is more hopeful. The principal agent in effecting this measure of improvement has been two successive doses of the *Arbutus Andrachne*, given with an interval of a fortnight, and both of which the patient noticed seemed to “ *clear the water* ” ; it had been thick before, an important point, considering the reputed action of *Arbutin* upon the urine.

Cases such as these show that the treatment of chronic diseases is not hopeless if full advantage be taken of the power of remedies, and that failure to cure very obstinate diseases proceeds from our neglecting to develop this remedial power in accordance with a natural order of things. If, in the place of Nature and her workings ; we interpose *our own* common sense and its stupidities, such hopeless-looking affections must ever remain incurable. Additional information as to the action of *Arbutus Andrachne* will be found in the *Hahnemannian Monthly* of April, 1895.